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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7190  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 7143  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5829  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 2416  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0671  
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1453  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 4014  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0836  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2502  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 1094  
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0659  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 1010  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003532

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HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: USAID/OTI VENEZUELA ELECTION RELATED ACTIVITIES

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Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,  
for Reason 1.4(d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) During President Chavez' launch of his reelection campaign in February this year he stated that the real opposition was the Empire and not its Venezuelan lackeys, a position he has maintained throughout the campaign. In this environment, USAID/OTI has prudentially kept a low profile, avoiding becoming a campaign issue while discreetly supporting a free and fair electoral process (in addition to our regular program activities in support of civil society). Our pre-electoral support includes backing for domestic electoral observation and encouraging voter turn-out. End Summary

¶2. (C) Ojo Electoral - Domestic Electoral Observation: For three years and three elections, OTI partner NDI has been providing technical assistance to Ojo Electoral, a domestic electoral observation NGO which is both technically competent and generally perceived as politically neutral. There is no other Venezuelan domestic observation group enjoying such a reputation. Unfortunately, a week before the election the CNE arbitrarily decided to give credentials to only 400 of Ojo's 1000 experienced observers, severely undercutting the group's ability to play a key role in this election, particularly considering that there are over 11,000 voting stations. Nevertheless, Ojo remains the domestic observation NGO with the largest number of accredited observers.

¶3. (C) IRI - Observer Training and Technical Assistance: During the weeks leading up to the election, IRI has been working with political parties to train over 400 party observers. They also brought in five technical specialists to assist the Rosales campaign. Two of these are exit poll experts, from Guatemala and Costa Rica, who will be helping

the Rosales command center as they tabulate their exit polls.

The remaining three are experts on government/political party relations and will be helping the Rosales command center behind the scenes with its election day interaction with the CNE (and any other trouble shooting necessary).

14. (C) Radar de Los Barrios - Electoral Observation:

Radar de Los Barrios is a network of community groups from poor neighborhoods in the Caracas area. While the majority of the members are government supporters, they are led by a long time OTI partner. It has been asked by the CNE to field 50 observers for the elections in partnership with the NGO Asamblea de Educadores (which is generally perceived as an opposition-aligned organization). OTI is providing Radar with logistical and communication support.

15. (C) Venezuela Convive - National Anti-Violence Drive:

Venezuela Convive is an OTI-funded network of NGOs organized prior to the recall referendum to reduce fears of electoral-related violence and promote peaceful coexistence. The network was reactivated several weeks prior to this presidential election as Convive blitzed the country with 2,000,000 brochures carrying the messages "Express your opinion, respecting the constitution and rejecting violence" and "In peace and democracy, Venezuela wins". The pamphlets were distributed by 600 volunteers from 100 NGOs across the country, and also appeared in 14 of Venezuela's most widely read newspapers. Two radio spots with the same messages played on at least 50 radio stations, as similarly-themed trailers played in a nationwide chain of movie theaters during the days leading up to the elections.

16. (C) FIE - Tolerance Network:

Recently OTI reactivated the "Network of Political Tolerance", another grouping of NGOs brought together in the

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lead-up to the referendum, composed of 15 member NGOs across the country. In the weeks leading up to the presidential election, 150 volunteers distributed 500,000 brochures promoting political tolerance as a cornerstone of democracy in the 10 most populous states of the country.

17. (C) IPYS - Seminar on Electoral Journalism:

IPYS, an NGO focused on media and communications, held 2 seminars for 25 journalists from 20 different newspapers, radio stations and TV news shows on international standards of reporting on electoral issues.

18. (C) Venezuelan Observatories - Truth about the Situation:

Through Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), OTI has funded 8 watchdog organizations. Four of these organizations released their initial reports on the situation in Venezuela during the month previous to the election, highlighting situations of particular concern to Venezuelans such as: incidence of violent crime, freedom of expression, Venezuelan prison system, and political rights of women. These observatories highlight key bolivarian policy failures and add value to the Rosales debate.

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Comment  
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19. (C) Chavez' campaign strategy has been to make his fight against the "Empire", proclaiming he is running his campaign against the USG. OTI has been very careful not to "take the bait" and hand the bolivarian candidate a campaign issue. Notwithstanding, OTI has been able to carry out creative programming that supports the USG's objective of a free and fair electoral process. This was done through NGOs and community groups, and helped counter Chavez' campaign message of fear, hatred and division.

BROWNFIELD